Handbook for Volunteers

2022 - 2025

CYNGOR Sir y Fflint Flintshire COUNTY COUNCIL

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1.0 Welcome

Thank you for offering your time to support Flintshire County Council and its wider goals. We want your time with us to be rewarding, safe and enjoyable and this handbook has been designed to provide information to help achieve this.

Please note that this guidance should not be seen as legally binding, nor is it intended to create a contractual relationship with our volunteers.

When you start with Flintshire County Council, you'll be given a named point of contact (your Volunteer Supervisor), so if you need to know anything that isn't covered in this guide, please do not hesitate to ask them.

2.0 Induction

Now the initial recruitment process is complete, there are a few things that need to be carried out before you can start your activity with us.

If your activity requires a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check you will need to complete the relevant paperwork and receive clearance before you can commence your activity. Your Volunteer Supervisor will make it clear if you require DBS clearance for your activity. This clearance is usually only required in certain circumstances and with particular groups (such as frequent contact with children or vulnerable adults).

We will need to confirm your identity; this is regardless of whether or not you are undergoing a DBS check. You should show your Volunteer Supervisor an original document, such as a drivers licence or passport.

Finally we will need you to provide us with details of two referees. This is usually a previous employer or voluntary body, but it can be anybody in a position of trust such as a school teacher or police officer.
Your Volunteer Supervisor will then carry out an induction with you. This will ensure you're aware of site specific issues such as health and safety, where the toilets are, and where you can get a cup of tea!

3.0 Training

Where there is a need for training to enable you to carry out your activity, we will endeavour to provide this. We are only able to offer training directly relevant to your volunteering role and not as a reward or reimbursement for your activity. All our training is given freely and there is no requirement for you to stay with us for a specific length of time after receiving this training - although we hope you will stay with us for as long as you are able. If you believe you have a specific training need, please speak to your Volunteer Supervisor.

4.0 Supervision

You will always have a named 'Volunteer Supervisor' who will be your first point of contact whilst carrying out your activity. Your supervisor will oversee any activity you carry out, as well as being on hand to deal with any queries or issues you may encounter during your time with us.

Your Volunteer Supervisor will arrange regular 'one-to-one' sessions with you. This is an informal opportunity to discuss your activity, pick up any latest news and make any suggestions and provide feedback.

You can refuse demands made of you if you consider them unrealistic, beyond the scope of your role or if you feel you do not have the appropriate skills to carry them out.

5.0 Attendance

As a volunteer, there is no obligation to attend your activity. However, your activity is very important to us and to service users and we will discuss with you at Induction the amount of time you are able to provide us with on a regular basis. If you are unable to attend for any reason, please try to let your Volunteer Supervisor know as soon as possible.

6.0 Ending your activity

If you wish to end your volunteering activity with us, you can do so at any time. However, we would ask that you let us know as soon as possible of your intention to leave. This will make it easier for us to recruit a new volunteer if required.

Your volunteering activity may be considered as a time-limited project. In other words, it will be made clear if we expect your activity to finish by a particular date. If this is the case you will be alerted to this by your Volunteer Supervisor during your induction.

Unfortunately some volunteering opportunities may end without a great deal of warning. Where this happens we will try to inform you as soon as we are able, and certainly try to provide you with five days' notice.

When you finish your activity with us, you will be asked to return any items or equipment we have given you to carry out the activity, and we request that you do this as soon as possible.

Volunteers who are leaving Flintshire County Council who have made a regular commitment, will be offered an exit interview, a reference and/or a statement of your achievements.

7.0 Guidance on conduct

When carrying out your activity with us, we would ask you to behave appropriately. The Council has specific policies and procedures relating to paid employees that sets out their expected standard of behaviour and conduct. Although these policies and procedures may not always apply to you, it is important that you are aware of them and in principle act in a similar fashion. Your Volunteer Supervisor will be able to provide more information. The following points highlight some of the key issues relevant to you.

7.1 Political Issues and Awareness for Volunteers

The Council is a political body. We are led by the decisions of our elected councillors, who represent the electoral divisions in which we all live. As a consequence we must all be seen to be as neutral and non-partisan as we can be during our activities with the Council.

Therefore you must not use your volunteering activity to further any political aims; to try to influence the Council's decision-making process, particularly in relation to your own activity or role (other than in an official consultation process); or use your position to influence elected members.

The reputation of the Council is also important to maintain. We must be as transparent as we can be, therefore please do not accept gifts from members of the public for your activities.

7.2 Health and Safety

Your Volunteer Supervisor will alert you to our Health and Safety policy and procedures. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 applies to employees, members of the public and volunteers. We all have an obligation to make our activity bases as safe as possible. Please alert your supervisor if you feel there is any Health & Safety concern at your location.

Although some health and safety obligations may seem unnecessary, please remember that your safety is our number one priority, and our employees take their duty of care towards you seriously and act to ensure you are not in a position of danger.

Please be sure to dress appropriately for your activity, this includes the use of any protective equipment you may have been issued with.

7.3 Equality and Diversity

Flintshire County Council welcomes people from all sections of the community regardless of race, gender, disability, age, nationality, sexual orientation or religious belief. Please be respectful to all our service users, employees, and other volunteers.

7.4 Use of Information Technology

The majority of volunteers will not require access to any of the Council's computer systems. However, if IT access is required as a part of your role, this will be made clear during your induction. You are more than welcome to make use of the public IT facilities in our libraries and other areas.

7.5 Alcohol & Drugs

Flintshire County Council has a zero tolerance approach to drugs and alcohol. Our Alcohol and Substance Misuse policy is applicable to you as a volunteer. Your supervisor will advise you of the policy and the requirements and procedures you will be expected to follow.

7.6 Confidentiality & Media

During the course of your activity you may become aware of confidential matters relating to employees, other volunteers or members of the public. We ask that you respect the

confidentiality of all information and do not disclose this information to third parties. Your Volunteer Supervisor will advise you on the legislation relating to the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts.

Please do not make statements or comments to the media on behalf of the Council. We have a dedicated team responsible for all communications. If you are interested in speaking to the media (for example – to promote a volunteer project) please liaise with your Volunteer Supervisor.

7.7 Smoking

Smoking is prohibited in all our buildings and vehicles. If you smoke off site, please consider the health, comfort and safety of others. You should ensure that cigarette ends and matches are fully extinguished and properly disposed of before leaving in an area. We also ask that you do not smoke in front of children.

8.0 Safeguarding

We have a duty to protect the most vulnerable in our community and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all who use our services. If, in the course of your activity, you become concerned about the wellbeing of any service user, you should alert your Volunteer Supervisor or another employee immediately.

All employees within the Council are trained to deal with these situations and will be able to help. Please do not try and resolve any situation yourself as, even with the best of intentions, you may make yourself vulnerable to allegations of impropriety.

Some of our volunteers who come into regular contact with vulnerable service users (such as children and vulnerable adults) will be asked to undertake a DBS check. . If your activity requires a DBS check, you will be informed by your Volunteer Supervisor at the earliest opportunity.

If required, you will be asked to complete the DBS form online which will ask for a variety of information including:

- *Current and some previous addresses*
- *Gender*
- *Date of birth*

- *Details of current convictions*
- *Documents confirming your identity*

Your Volunteer Supervisor will support you with what details and paperwork will be required to help you complete the DBS check online. You will be sent the certificate direct, therefore you will be required to provide this to you volunteer supervisor in order to start your activities with us.

9.0 Complaints

Complaints by and regarding volunteers are very rare. However, from time to time problems can occur and it is only wise that we have a system on how to deal with them. It is in all of our interests to resolve complaints as quickly and fairly as possible.

If you have an informal complaint, please speak with your Volunteer Supervisor in the first instance. Both of you should try and agree a plan and timescale for resolving the complaint. If you are uncomfortable in speaking with your Volunteer Supervisor, then you should request to speak to their line manager.

If you formally wish to raise a complaint, you can do so via the Councils complaints procedure, details of which are on the website at www.flintshire.gov.uk.

If a complaint is made about you, your Volunteer Supervisor may call you into an informal meeting and your Volunteers Supervisors Line Manager may also be present.

During this meeting you will likely discuss any resolution that may be possible and a timescale for implementing any changes. The issue will usually be resolved at this point and no further action will need to be taken. However, occasionally, additional action may need to be taken that could include training or moving to a different activity. In some circumstances it may be necessary to ask you to stop your activity, e.g. if frequent 'no shows' mean we cannot rely on you.

In the, extremely unlikely event of a serious incident such as physical violence or discriminatory behaviour you will be asked to stop your activity immediately. Your Volunteer Supervisor will explain why this has happened and point out why your behaviour was unreasonable. In this instance you may be asked to leave with immediate effect.

10.0 Conclusion

We all hope that your time spent volunteering with us will be enjoyable. Our volunteers tell us that they take many positives from their activities and we hope you will as well. Your time is very much valued by all of us at the Council and we thank you for being a part of our services. Please enjoy your experience and do not hesitate to contact your Volunteer Supervisor for support.